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International Court of Justice

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D 627

Extracts from a despatch from the British Minister in Copenhagen to the Foreign Secretary.

[N 5040/5040/15]

Mr. Howard Smith to Viscount Halifax.

Foreign Office, April 25, 1940.

My Lord, ...

The actual events of the 9th April have been pieced together by members of my staff from actual eye-witness or from reliable information subsequently received and are given below. Early in the morning towards 5 o'clock three small German transports steamed into the approach to Copenhagen harbour, whilst a number of aeroplanes circled overhead. The northern battery, guarding the harbour approach, fired a warning shot at these planes when it was seen that they carried German markings. Apart from this, the Danes offered no further resistance, and the German vessels fastened alongside the quays in the Free Harbour. Some of these aeroplanes proceeded to drop leaflets over the town urging the population to keep calm and co-operate with the Germans. I enclose a specimen of this leaflet, which is written in a bastard Norwegian-Danish, a curiously un-German disregard of detail, together with a translation. Approximately 800 soldiers landed with full equipment, and marched to Kastellet, the old fortress of Copenhagen and now a barracks. The door was locked, so the Germans promptly burst it open with explosives, and rounded up all the Danish soldiers within, together with the womenfolk employed in the mess. The garrison offered no resistance, and it appears that they were taken completely by surprise. One officer tried to escape in a motor car, but his chauffeur was shot before they could get away. He died in hospital two days later. After seizing the barracks, a detachment was sent to Amalienborg, the King's palace, where they engaged the Danish sentries on guard, wounding three, one of them fatally..... Meanwhile, a large fleet of bombers flew over the city at low altitudes, and surveyed the aerodromes of Kastrup and Vaerlose. Kastrup, the civil port, was quite undefended, and the Germans landed several transports there, containing mostly staff officers and other officials. At Vaerlose, the military station, a number of Danish planes were assembled on the field. Two of these attempted to take off, but were shot down immediately. Shortly afterwards the Germans dropped a number of incendiary bombs and destroyed the hangars and aircraft. By 8 o'clock in the morning the Germans had control of all points of strategic value, and were rapidly consolidating their positions..... Meanwhile, other troops had been landed at Gedser and Korsor. These proceeded rapidly northwards. Subsequently, a shore battery was erected at Kalundborg, and Roskilde was placed under martial law..... A large force was sent up to Helsingor and sentries were posted along the coast facing Sweden.....

It has been difficult to ascertain exactly what occurred in Jutland..... It is clear, however, that the enemy invaded Jutland from the south at dawn on the 9th April and were at first resisted by the Danish forces, who suffered casualties..... The chances of resistance were weakened by the extent to which the forces appear to have been taken by surprise. The chief permanent official of the Ministry of War, for instance, motored into Copenhagen on the morning of the 9th April and drove blithely past a sentry, who challenged him, in blissful ignorance that this was not one of his own men. It took a bullet, which passed through the lapels of his coat, to disillusion him.

INTERNATIONAL MILITARY TRIBUNAL
NURNBERG, GERMANY
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Filed Dec 7, 1945

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INTERNATIONAL MILITARY TRIBUNAL

I, ..DAVID PATRICK MAXWELL FYFE....., hereby certify that the document annexed hereto and numbered D.627 is an official British Governmental document,

~~a report of the United Nations~~,

D.P.N.F

an act or document of a committee set up for the investigation of war crimes,

~~a record or finding of a Tribunal of the United Nations,~~

within the meaning of Article 21 of the Charter of the International Military Tribunal.

and a document made by a person in the employment of the British Government in the ordinary course of his duties, and that such person was in a position and under a duty to make all reasonable investigations relating to the subject matter thereof.

(signed) D.P. Maxwell Fyfe

(date) 1st December 1945.

(strike out and initial all words not applicable).

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